GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1600
ANSWERED ON:28.11.2001
DEATH OF CHILDREN AFTER ADMINISTERED VITAMIN A DROPS
AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA;CHANDRA NATH SINGH;SADASHIVRAO DADOBA MANDLIK

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that several children have affected and several out of them died in Assam after administered vitamin-A solution drops, recently;

(b) if so, the details therefor;

(c) whether the Government have send any central team to Assam for the enquiry;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the corrective steps taken by the Government in this direction?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (PROF. RITA VERMA)

(a) to (f) A statement is annexed.

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PART (a) TO (f) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1600 TC
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A state-wide campaign for administration of Vitamin A to children was organised by Government of Assam on 11th Nov. 2001. The compaign was sponsored by the UNICEF.Information received from the State Government indicates that a large number of children reported symptoms of side effects within a few hours of receiving the Vitamin A dose and some died. As of 20.11.2001, 953 children are reported to have suffered adverse symptoms and 19 are reported to have died. The cause of the deaths is under investigation. The State Government has indicated that has indicated that the deaths are not likely to be related to Vitamin A administration.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had deputed a team of officers to make an onsite inquiry about the incident.The team reported that during the campaign UNICEF had replaced the two ml spoons usually supplied with the Vitamin A solution with 5 ml cups for the campaign. It was suggested by the team that during the campaign some children might have received excess dose of Vitamin A resulting in symptoms of toxicity. The team had also lifted samples of three batches of Vitamin A for testing utilized during the campaign. The results of the analysis conducted by Central Drugs Laboratory, Kolkatta indicate that samples were of standard quality.

Government of India have advised State Governments to strengthen the routine ongoing programme for Vitamin A administration, in stead of launching campaigns for Vitamin A supplementation. Minister for Health and Family Welfare has made a statement regarding the incident in the both Houses of Parliament.A high level Committee of Experts under the chairpersonship of Dr.N.K. Ganguli, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research has been constituted to go into various programmatic and technical aspects relating to Vitamin A administration.